

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OSLO 02760 101516Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 OES-07 DLOS-09
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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3895
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
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BELGRADE FOR US DEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, CSCE, UR, NO
SUBJECT: SOVIET FISHERMAN DEFECTION TO NORWEGIAN SURVEILLANCE SHIP
MAY IMPACT ON CURRENT FISHING TALKS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY: A YOUNG SOVIET FISHERMAN HAS
REPORTEDLY DEFECTED TO A NORWEGIAN FISHING INSPECTION VESSEL
OFF NORTH NORWAY AND HAS ASKED POLITICAL ASYLUM. HIS REQUEST
IS UNDER REVIEW AND WILL PROBABLY BE APPROVED. THE INCIDENT
COULD CAUSE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR NORWEGIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS
AND PARTICULARLY COULD AFFECT THE DISPUTED GON-USSR GRAY-ZONE
FISHING TALKS WHICH ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN MOSCOW JUNE 13.
END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 OSLO 02760 101516Z

1. A 23-YEAR-OLD SOVIET FISHERMAN DEFECTED TO THE NORWEGIAN
FISHING INSPECTION SHIP "NORNEN" AFTER A NORNEN OFFICER HAD
BOARDED A RUSSIAN TRAWLER FOR A ROUTINE INVESTIGATION JUNE 9
APPROXIMATELY 100 MILES NORTH OF NORWAY'S NORTH CAPE (BUT
NOT WITHIN THE AREA DISPUTED BY NORWAY AND RUSSIA). AFTER A
DESPERATE ESCAPE EFFORT IN WHICH THE FISHERMAN PLUNGED FROM THE

FISHING VESSEL INTO NEAR FREEZING SEAS AND WAS PICKED UP BY THE CREW OF THE NORNEN'S LAUNCH, THE RUSSIAN ASKED FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM. THE SEAMAN IS NOW BEING HELD BY NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES PENDING FINAL DECISION ON HIS REQUEST. IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT HE WILL BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN NORWAY.

2. DURING WHAT PROVED TO BE A DRAMATIC DEFECTION, THE SOVIET TRAWLER REFUSED TO ALLOW THE NORWEGIAN BOARDING OFFICER TO LEAVE THE TRAWLER FOR 30 MINUTES IN AN EFFORT TO BARGAIN HIS RETURN FOR THAT OF THEIR CREWMAN. AFTER THE NORWEGIANS FIRED TWO SIGNAL FLARES ACROSS THE FISHING BOAT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THEY MEANT BUSINESS AND WANTED THEIR OFFICER BACK, THE SOVIET FISHERMAN RELEASED HIM.

3. THE SOVIET ESCAPEE SAYS HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF A POLITICAL REFUGEE AND WANTS ASYLUM IN NORWAY AND THE GON JUSTICE MINISTRY IS REVIEWING HIS REQUEST FOR ASYLUM. HE HAS REFUSED TO MEET WITH SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS DESPATCHED NORTH FROM OSLO TO SEE HIM. THE SOVIETS CLAIM HE FELL OVERBOARD. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: IT SEEMS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THE GON WILL PERMIT THE YOUNG FISHERMAN TO REMAIN HERE IF HE WISHES. THE NORWEGIANS HAVE A LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD GRANTING POLITICAL ASYLUM GENERALLY. THIS ATTITUDE HAS BEEN REINFORCED IN RECENT WEEKS BY THE SWEDISH DECISION NOT TO RETURN THE SOVIET AIRCRAFT HIJACKER AS WELL AS A RECENT AND MUCH QUESTIONED GON DECISION TO RETURN A POLISH CITIZEN LIVING TEMPORARILY IN NORWAY TO HIS HOMELAND WHILE HE WAS STILL SEEKING A U.S. VISA. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 OSLO 02760 101516Z

ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS CURRENTLY KEEN POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE UPCOMING CSCE CONFERENCE AND GON MUST BE MINDFUL OF THE SEPTEMBER NORWEGIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

5. BUT THE INCIDENT AND A DECISION TO RECEIVE THE DEFECTOR IS BOUND TO COMPLICATE NORWAY'S ALREADY DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. THE STALEMATED NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DISPUTED FISHERY GRAY-ZONE IN THE BARENTS SEA ARE DUE TO RESUME IN MMTCOW JUNE 13 BETWEEN GON LAW OF THE SEA MINISTER EVENSEN AND SOVIET FISHERY MINISTER ISHKOV. IF, AS WE SUSPECT, THE SOVIETS ARE IN LESS OF A HURRY TO REACH AN AGREEMENT THAN THE NORWEGIANS, THEY MAY OBSTRUCT THE TALKS (OR EVEN POSTPONE THEM) AND MAY ALSO RAISE NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HANDLING OF SUCH CASES IN FISHERY AREAS GENERALLY. ANDERS

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY: A YOUNG SOVIET FISHER
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